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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [CH](#) [HK](#)
SUBJECT: CHIEF EXECUTIVE ELECTION COMMITTEE: WHO MIGHT VOTE
FOR THE DEMOCRATS?

REF: A. HONG KONG 4690
[1](#)B. HONG KONG 4398
[1](#)C. HONG KONG 3208

Classified By: Acting DPO Laurent Charbonnet; Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On December 10, a limited number of Hong Kong residents will select the 800 members of the Hong Kong Chief Executive Election Committee (EC), which in turn will choose the next Chief Executive (CE) in March 2007. Ref a reviewed the complicated Hong Kong electoral process, discussed prospects for Alan Leong, the pan-democratic candidate, to reach the 100-vote threshold needed to nominate a candidate for the March election, and noted that the pan-democrats are unlikely to win any seats from the First Sector. Instead, they hope to win enough seats in the Second and Third Sectors, which include various professional and religious groups, and also expect at least 18-20 of the pan-democratic Legco members holding seats in the Fourth Sector to help Leong reach the threshold. None of our contacts could provide any substantive information on attempts by Beijing to influence the election, although some observed that indirect influence from Beijing served to stifle the growth of democracy in Hong Kong. An interesting side issue in the Fourth Sector is the intent of 5-7 Legco pan-democrats to abstain from the EC election process, because they view the "small circle" electoral system as inherently undemocratic; to participate, in their view, would only help legitimize the existing system and provide an unjustifiable mandate for the presumed victor, Donald Tsang. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Hong Kong Chief Executive Election Committee is composed of four sectors, each with 200 members. As ref a noted, Hong Kong's electoral system is Byzantine and at best only partially democratic; the result of the electoral process almost certainly will be a new five-year term for the incumbent CE, Donald Tsang, who then will preside over possibly intense debate on further democratization and political reform in Hong Kong. This cable provides a more detailed description of the selection process for the EC's Second Sector, which includes various professional groups from which the pan-democrats hope to obtain most of their seats; the Third Sector, where the democrats hope to pick up twenty-plus seats from the social welfare and religion subsectors; and the Fourth Sector, which mostly consists of ex-officio members from the National People's Congress (NPC), the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the Hong Kong Legislative Assembly (Legco), and Heung Yee Kuk (an organization of certain indigenous New Territories residents). The Fourth Sector also will hold contested elections for 42 delegates from the district councils.

Second Sector: Key for the Pan-democrats

13. (C) The Second Sector is the largest and most "popular" of the four EC sectors, comprising over 80 percent of the 220,000 registered voters. As such, the pan-democrats strongly believe they need a solid voter turnout on December 10 to increase their chances of success. The sector's legal, education, higher education, medical, health services, and information technology subsectors are the key focus areas for the pro-democracy camp, and likely will account for 55-65 nominations for Alan Leong. In the legal subsector, which is a stronghold for the pan-democrats in general and the Civic Party in particular, the pan-democrats are fielding 20 of the 42 candidates and are optimistic that they can capture 18 of the 20 seats available. There are two main groups contesting this subsector: the pro-democracy, 16-member "Vote for Universal Suffrage in 2012" ticket and the pro-government, 12-member group of solicitors headed by Law Society president Peter Lo. Similarly, the education subsector also is regarded as pro-democratic due to the dominance of the 80,000 member Professional Teachers' Union (PTU), which is headed by Democratic Party (DP) legislator Cheung Man-kwong; pan-democrats hope to win 12-15 of the 20 seats. In the higher education subsector, with 49 candidates competing for 20 seats, the pan-democrats hope its 15 nominees will win 12-14 seats.

14. (C) In the medical subsector, with 63 candidates contesting 20 seats, independent democratic Legco member Kwok Ka-ki told us that about ten of the twenty seats were certain to go to incumbent CE Tsang. Kwok said a handful of the remaining votes would be cast by "young doctors," who while relatively unknown by voters had been brought in to "balance

HONG KONG 00004691 002 OF 003

out" the old hands in the medical subsector. In the health services subsector, with 37 candidates competing for 20 seats, pan-democratic hopes are uncertain; six candidates represent the Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff, headed by pan-democratic lawmaker Joseph Lee, but most of the other candidates have not publicly expressed their preferences. Finally, in the information technology and engineering subsectors, 16 of the 81 candidates competing for a total of 40 seats are pan-democrats. A majority of IT subsector voters reportedly support PCCW Chairman Richard Li, who heads the "IT20" ticket, while the conservative Hong Kong Institute of Engineers leads the engineering subsector.

15. (C) While none of our contacts could provide any substantive information on attempts by Beijing to influence the election, Democratic Party Vice Chairman Chan King-ming, who is running for a seat in the higher education subsector, described the election to us as a "dirty game." He said Beijing's influence on the election, while not direct or confirmed, had stifled party politics in Hong Kong and limited pressure on CE Donald Tsang following his Policy Address in October. Alluding to increasing democracy in the SAR, Chan said that "the beginning for Hong Kong is the end for Beijing." Chan confidently surmised that "Hong Kong trusts and has confidence in its people," but that "Beijing does not." Chan also charged that Beijing's "middle men" are a manifestation of the Central Government's lack of trust in the SAR's political system, but he admitted that knowing the real affiliation -- government or not -- or intentions of each was difficult. He also said the "middle men" frequently asked whether the U.S. was funding political activities in the SAR. Legco member Kwok, who noted that the general lack of interest in the EC election served as a referendum on Hong Kong's struggling governance, also believed that Beijing had not pressured past Election Committee elections, but that the young doctors may have "Central Government Liaison Office (CGLO) loyalties."

Third Sector: Social Welfare and Religion

16. (C) The Third Sector includes five subsectors: agriculture and fisheries; labor; religion; social welfare; and sports, performing arts, culture, and publication. Each of these subsectors will elect forty members of the EC; overall, the pan-democratic groups hope to win at least twenty of the 200 seats, primarily from the social welfare subsector and with at most a few from the religion subsector. The other subsectors are dominated by corporate voters. (Note: Corporate body voters are a unique Hong Kong electoral concept. Depending on the subsector, a union, professional association, business chamber, religious group, etc. may be designated by the HKG as a corporate voter in the EC election; critics of the corporate vote complain that this severely limits the franchise within the various subsectors and that corporate voters tend to be conservative. End Note.)

17. (C) Fernando Cheung, a democratic legislator representing the social welfare functional constituency, told us he hoped pro-democracy social workers would win more than twenty out of the forty seats in the December 10 subsector election. In one of the most hotly contested elections this Sunday, 99 candidates are courting 11,545 eligible individual voters, including a reported 1,000 Government social workers. According to Cheung, there are six separate groups campaigning for votes in the subsector. Three groups have publicly stated that they are likely to nominate the pan-democratic Chief Executive (CE) candidate, Alan Leong, including a union group wanting "protection" for social welfare workers, a group running under the pro-democracy banner, and a group of independents who are "inclined" to vote for Leong; the remaining three coalitions likely will vote for CE Tsang.

18. (C) In the religion subsector, the democrats at most may pick up a handful of supporters. As described in ref c, the Islamic, Daoist, Confucian and Buddhist subsectors have a total of 26 members on the EC and are widely expected to appoint all pro-Government representatives. The remaining 14 votes in the religion subsector are split evenly between the Catholic and Protestant communities. Auxiliary Bishop John Tong of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese told us that his diocese, as a "matter of principle," did not agree with the "small-circle" CE election and had deliberately chosen a strategy of "passive cooperation" on providing the Government with seven Catholic EC members. Nevertheless, Tong said he could understand the desire by some Catholics to participate

HONG KONG 00004691 003 OF 003

in this "election" and did not want to be accused of "trying to take away someone's human right" by denying them the opportunity to serve on the EC. Therefore, the Diocese had submitted the names of all interested Catholic nominees to the HKG, which then staged a lottery to choose seven of the twenty-plus candidates. Tong would not speculate on how the Catholic EC members would vote; he chose to emphasize that the Diocese intended to remain "100 percent passive" during the CE election process.

19. (C) The Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC), which represents Hong Kong's Protestant community, organized an internal election open to all Protestant Christians on October 28-29. More than 17,000 votes were cast to elect seven Protestant representatives from among 27 candidates. Chan Ka Wai, a Democratic Party district councilor, told us that at least six of the elected Protestant representatives were likely to vote for Tsang, and that there "may be" one member who would vote for Leong. Asked if he had heard of Beijing interference in the HKCC election, Chan said that 2-3 of the candidates had been mobilized to participate in the election by the Central Government Liaison Office (CGLO); he was unclear whether these individuals were ultimately elected to represent the Protestant community.

Fourth Sector

¶10. (C) In the Fourth Sector, most of the 200 seats (NPC, CPPCC, Legco, and Heung Yee Kuk subsectors) are "ex-officio" and uncontested, so are not at stake in the December 10 vote.

The pan-democrats hope to gain some of the 42 seats in the competitive district council races, where they have fielded 27 candidates, including two from the Civic Party and 25 from the DP. They are opposed by 48 pro-government candidates, including twelve from the DAB. Some observers believe the pan-democrats have little chance to win any seats in this subsector, in part because some of the more radical pan-democratic district councilors are boycotting the "small circle" election process.

¶11. (C) An interesting issue in the Fourth Sector is the decision by 5-7 of the Legco pan-democrats to abstain from the EC election process, which would mean that Alan Leong can only count on 18-20 votes from among his democratic Legco colleagues. Most of this group of abstainers, which includes Emily Lau of The Frontier, "Long Hair" Leung Kwok-hung and Albert Chan of the League of Social Democrats, Lee Cheuk-yan and Lau Chin-shek of the Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU), and Leung Yiu-chung of the Neighborhood and Workers Service Center, will boycott the entire nomination process because they believe the "small circle" electoral system is inherently undemocratic; to participate, in their view, would only help legitimize the existing system and provide an unjustifiable mandate for the presumed victor, Donald Tsang. Chan noted, however, that Lee Cheuk-yan and Lau Chin-shek have said that they would cast their votes for Alan Leong, if that would "make the difference" and propel him over the 100-vote threshold. One other probable abstainer, independent democrat Albert "Taipan" Cheng, reportedly will do so due to his long personal friendship with Tsang. Elaborating on the reasons for their boycott, Albert Chan told us on December 1 that Alan Leong's hope to engage in debate with Donald Tsang was "ridiculous." Doing so only would create further confusion in the minds of the people, giving them a false impression that they were "somehow involved in the election process." Chan said it would be far better if all pan-democrats totally boycotted the election process.

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